

Can adaptable sewing tools  
improve development of sewing  
skills and foster a sense of  
inclusion?

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# Background

- **Who?** Specialist Technician - BA Fashion at Central Saint Martins
- **What?** Adaptable sewing tools kit distributed during Essential Sewing Skills workshop
- **When?** Teaching 1st Year students during busy Autumn Term



# Rationale

## Why?

- Inclusive practice unit - disability and reflections on accessibility within studios.
- Knowledge exchange with colleague
- Design and Disability at V&A - How inventions and design for disability are often adopted by able bodied people and help wider society



Fork for Cindy suspended in a silicone cap  
© Photo by Michael J. Maloney

# Adaptable Sewing Toolkit

- Tools to aid sewing whether through their conventional uses, or adapted by students
- Introduced during first sewing skills workshop with First Year students
- Includes:
  - **Small and Large Screwdriver** (Higher Torque, Guide fabric)
  - **Thimble** (Protective, additional grip)
  - **Pinch Action Scissors** (Less strenuous on hands)
  - **Rotary Cutter** (Doesn't require pinching motion)
  - **Fabric Clips** (Less fiddly than pins)
  - **Needle Threader** (Helpful for vision and fine motor skill impairment)
  - **Magnetic Seam Guide** (Guides fabric)
  - **Unpicker** (Accurately unpicks seams)



Adaptable sewing tool kit  
© Photo by Charlie Lewis

# Methodology

- **Mixed methods approach** - survey, observation and interviews
- **Survey** provided measurable, quantitative, qualitative and experiential data, easy to distribute
- **1st Year Workshop - Fostering inclusivity** from beginning of students time at CSM. Busy period meant incorporating into existing workshop
- I used **Thematic Analysis** of data and observational research and reflection, looking at both student experience and comments, along with personal and colleague observations, acquired through interviews.

1. b) Have you used the tools before?

Yes  No

1. c) Which tools did you use?

Large screwdriver  Small screwdriver   
Fabric clips  Needle threader   
Thimble  Magnetic seam guide   
Pinch action scissors  Unpicker   
Rotary cutter

1. d) Why did you use them?

Easy to hold/use  Looked nice   
Have used before  Wanted to try something new   
More comfortable

Additional comments (optional)

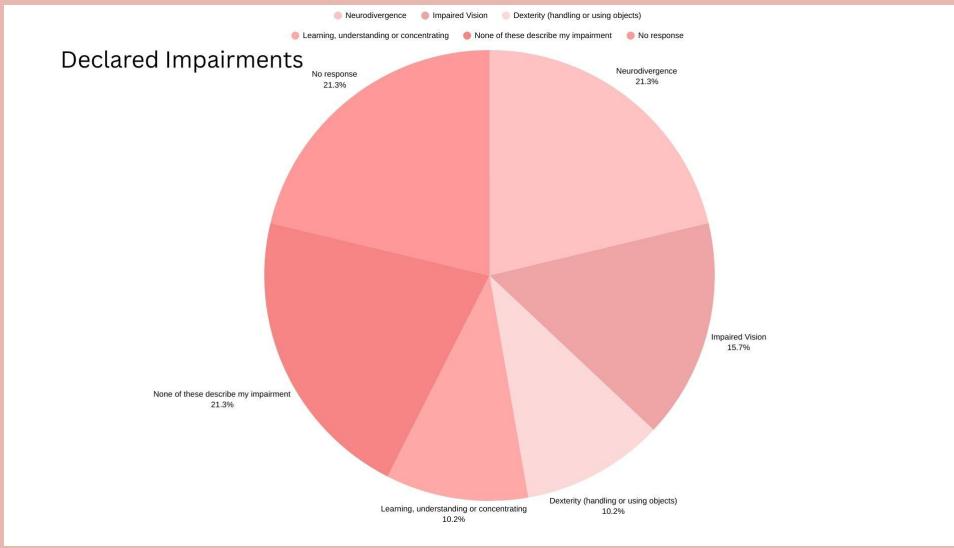
1. e) Why didn't you use them?

Difficult to handle  Don't know how to use   
Too small  In use   
Didn't know about them  Had my own

Additional comments (optional)

Survey example

# Project Findings: Disability



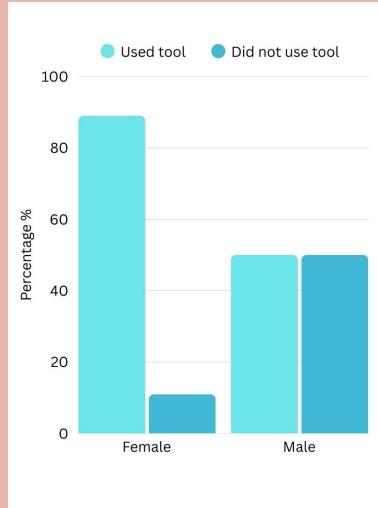
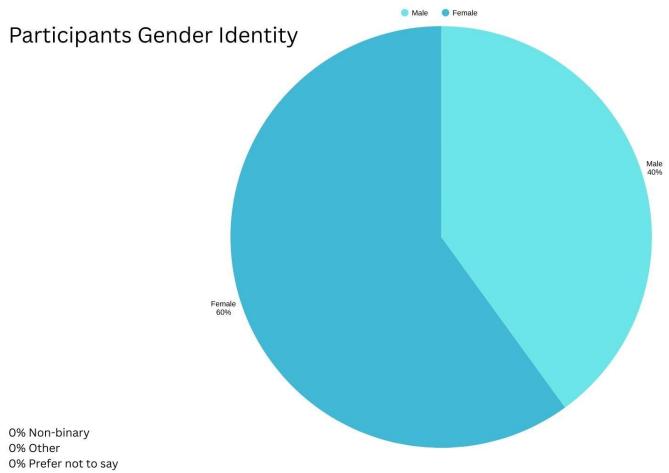
“(Helped) manipulate fabric through feed”

“Poor vision meant I couldn’t thread needle well so it (needle threading tool) was very helpful”



# Project Findings: Gender

Participants Gender Identity



- 89% female identifying participants used tools
- Of those who engaged with the tools:
  - 62.5% used before
  - 37.5% had not used the tool before
- 11% female identifying participants didn't use tools.
- Of those who didn't use the tools:
  - 0% had used the tools before
  - 100% had never used them
- 50% male identifying participants used tools
- Of those who engaged with the tools:
  - 33% had used before
  - 67% had not used the tool before
- 50% male identifying participants didn't use tools
- Of those who didn't use the tools:
  - 33% had used the tools before
  - 67% had never used them

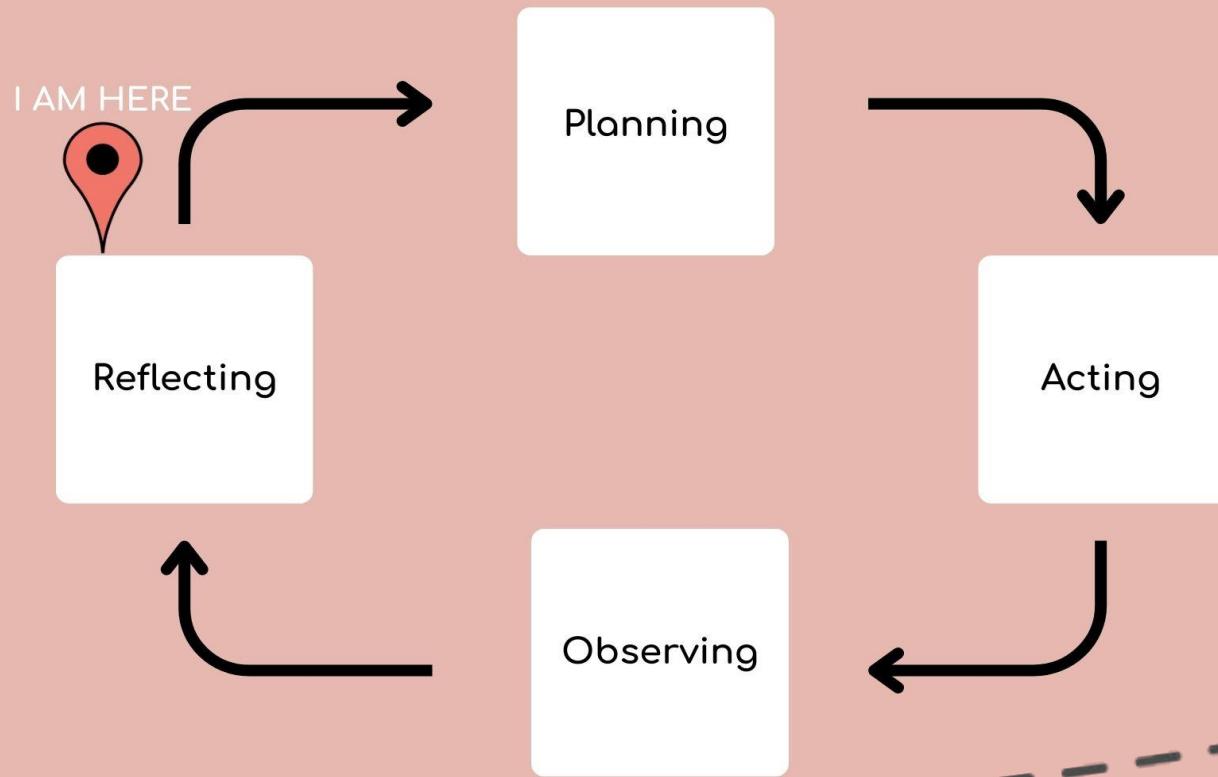
# Reflections

- Fostered a sense of inclusion for the students
- Trial run of ARP cycle
- My expectations of the project and who would find the tools useful changed - Vision impairment
- Review survey questions - impacted thematic analysis
- Barriers around student participation and attitudes, along with time restrictions.
- Boosted my confidence in my teaching practice



Reset project design by Mons Lohof Photography by Yujin Lim and Sean Oh  
Another Magazine online

# Action Research Cycle



# What Next?

“Descriptive research may not answer all the fundamental questions, but it provides useful data which can serve as a basis for further research”

Verma & Beard 1981

- Interview format - more established relationship with - applying for funding to provide incentives for participation
- Sparked conversations and is actively fostering a more inclusive space.
- Capital bid to install adapted sewing machines in the fashion studios
- Bookable toolkit resource
- Sharing the tools with the Outreach programme
- Improving vision with tools on existing machinery

# References

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